

ROUTINE

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RELEASED IN PART COMING

B6, B1, 1.4(D)

RECEIVED

ACTION

DEPARTMENT OF STATE  
ARA/NEA REARCS

PAGE 01 OF 02 CARACA B3317 00 OF 03 B221482 013961 5072302  
ACTION: VE (02)

INFO: DAMB (02) RJ (01) MH (01) JPL (01) JRH (01) ARA (01) PPG (01)  
OAS (01) PPA (01) EPSC (01) DEPC (01) LNE (01) CO (02)  
PE (01) EC (01) BL (01) BR (02) OCAR (01) DEP (01) TBGY (01)  
B3/12472 A1 RD TOTAL COPIES: 026

ACTION ARA-00

INFO LOG-00 ACDA-00 ACDE-00 AID-00 ACQ-00 CEA-01 COME-00  
CTME-00 DODE-00 DODE-00 SRPP-00 OS-00 EB-00 EXIM-01  
E-00 FRB-00 H-D1 TEDE-00 INR-00 IB-00 ITG-01  
L-00 ABS-00 NSAE-00 NSCE-00 OMB-01 OPIC-01 PA-00  
PM-00 PRS-00 P-00 SP-00 SSO-00 STR-00 TRSE-00  
T-00 PMB-00 DSCG-00 DRL-02 G-00 WFAT-00 SAS-00  
/019V

-----7CE6D3 022149Z /38

R 022139Z NOV 98  
FM AMEMBASSY CARACAS  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2160  
INFO AMEMBASSY BOGOTA  
AMEMBASSY LIMA  
AMEMBASSY QUITO  
AMEMBASSY LA PAZ  
AMEMBASSY BRASILIA  
AMEMBASSY GEORGETOWN  
AMEMBASSY PORT OF SPAIN  
USCINCSB MIAMI FL  
DIA WASHDC  
CIA WASHDC  
USIA WASHDC 1897

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF STATE  
CLASSIFIED BY DEPT. OF STATE, M. GRAFELD, DAS, A/GIS, ACTING

REVIEW AUTHORITY: ADOLPH H EISNER

CLASSIFICATION: CONFIDENTIAL REASON: 1.4(D)

DECLASSIFY AFTER: 1 NOV 2023

DATE/CASE ID: 14 JUN 2010 200503654

CONFIDENTIAL CARACAS B03317

E.B. 12958: DECL: 11/02/08  
TAGS: PGOV, PREL, ECON, VE

SUBJECT: [REDACTED] WAS NOT GIVEN UP ON IRENE

CLASSIFIED BY [REDACTED] REASON: 1.5 B6  
(D)

SUMMARY

1. (C) PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE IRENE SAEZ'S POPULARITY IS BADLY UNDERESTIMATED BY THE POLLS. [REDACTED] SAID

IRENE IS THE ONLY CANDIDATE WHO CAN COMPETE WITH HUGO CHAVEZ IN THE "POPULAR SECTORS." HE DISMISSED THE RECENT POLL RISE OF HENRIQUE SALAS ROMER, DESCRIBING THE POLLS AS "BOUGHT AND PAID FOR BY SALAS."

SAID THE UPCOMING NOVEMBER 8 REGIONAL ELECTIONS WILL "CHANGE EVERYTHING" AND AGAIN MAKE IRENE AN ATTRACTIVE CANDIDATE BEHIND WHICH ANTI-CHAVEZ FORCES COULD UNITE. END SUMMARY.

IRENE MIGHT BE DOWN, BUT SHE IS NOT OUT

2. (U) DCM AND POLCOUNS MEET OCTOBER 26 WITH [REDACTED]

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3. (C) [REDACTED] POLLS WHICH PLACED COPEI-ALLIED PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE IRENE SAEZ IN FOURTH PLACE, BEHIND HUGO CHAVEZ, HENRIQUE SALAS ROMER, AND LUIS ALFARO, BADLY UNDERESTIMATED IRENE'S POPULARITY. ALLEGING THAT THE POLLSTERS DID NOT GET INTO THE BARRIOS OR POOR NEIGHBORHOODS WHERE IRENE WAS STILL VERY POPULAR, [REDACTED] ASSERTED THAT IRENE WAS THE ONLY CANDIDATE WHO COULD COMPETE WITH CHAVEZ FOR THE VOTE OF VENEZUELA'S POOR. [REDACTED] SAID THIS ASSERTION WAS BASED ON [REDACTED] THE MARGINALIZED NEIGHBORHOODS IN CARACAS AND OTHER LARGE METROPOLITAN AREAS.

4. (C) [REDACTED] IRENE'S POPULARITY HAD FALLEN DRAMATICALLY OVER THE COURSE OF A YEAR. HE ATTRIBUTED THIS TO HER INITIAL INABILITY "TO EXPLAIN HER ALLIANCE WITH COPEI," WHICH WAS VIEWED BY MANY OF HER SUPPORTERS AS A SELL-OUT TO TRADITIONAL PARTIES, AND A CONFUSED AND CONFUSING CAMPAIGN STRUCTURE.

5. (C) [REDACTED] THESE PROBLEMS HAD BEEN RESOLVED. IRENE HAD SHARPENED HER IMAGE AS A "CONCILIATOR AND FACILITATOR" WHO COULD WORK WITH ALL PARTIES AND POLITICAL GROUPINGS. THIS MAKES HER AN ATTRACTIVE PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE, HE CONTINUED, SINCE THE NEXT PRESIDENT MUST BE A CONSENSUS-BUILDER IN A DIVERSE AND FRAGMENTED POLITICAL ENVIRONMENT.

6. (C) [REDACTED] POINTED TO THE INFORMAL ALLIANCE BETWEEN IRENE, [REDACTED] AND THE DEMOCRATIC ACTION PARTY (ADI) IN CARACAS AS EVIDENCE

OF WHAT ROLE IRENE COULD PLAY. DEPENDING ON WHAT HAPPENS DURING THE NOVEMBER 8 REGIONAL ELECTIONS, [REDACTED] SAID, IRENE COULD BECOME A KEY FIGURE IN FORGING A BROAD ANTI-CHAVEZ ALLIANCE.

BAD-MOUTNING SALAS ROMER

7. (C) [REDACTED] DISMISSED THE ALLEGED RISE OF HENRIQUE SALAS ROMER TO SECOND PLACE IN THE POLLS, ACCUSING SALAS ROMER OF PURCHASING THE POLLS OF TWO COMPANIES--DATAANALISIS AND MERCANALISIS--WHICH RECENTLY PUT SALAS ROMER ALMOST EVEN WITH CHAVEZ.

8. (C) BOTH DESCRIBED SALAS ROMER AS AN "ELITIST" WHO COULD NOT ATTRACT VOTES FROM VENEZUELA'S VAST "POPULAR SECTORS." THEY ALSO CHARGED SALAS ROMER WITH BEING "ARROGANT, UNPRINCIPLED AND UNCOMPROMISING."

9. (C) [REDACTED] SALAS ROMER HAD GUTTED AD AND COPEI IN CARABOBO STATE WHEN HE WAS GOVERNOR, AND INDICATED THAT BOTH PARTIES EXPECTED HIM TO DO THE SAME NATIONALLY SHOULD HE BE

ELECTED. THEY ALLEGED THAT SALAS ROMER BROOKED NO OPPOSITION TO HIS AUTOCRATIC IMPULSES, AND COULD NOT WORK WITH PARTIES SUCH AS AD AND COPEI.

BUT CHAVEZ CAN BE WORKED WITH

10. (C) IN COMPARISON, [REDACTED] MORE SANGUINE ABOUT A CHAVEZ PRESIDENCY

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MAISTO

NOVEMBER 8 WILL CHANGE EVERYTHING

11. (C) [ ] WERE NOT YET PREPARED TO CONCEDE VICTORY TO CHAVEZ. THEY ARGUED THAT THE CURRENT POLITICAL LANDSCAPE IS ARTIFICIAL BECAUSE NONE OF THE CANDIDATES HAD BEEN TESTED ELECTORALLY. [ ] ARGUED THAT THE NOVEMBER 8 REGIONAL ELECTIONS WILL BE "A DE FACTO FIRST ROUND" OF THE PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS. HE SAID THE BIG LOSER IN THE NOVEMBER 8 ELECTIONS WILL BE SALAS ROMER, WINNING NO MORE THAN TWO GOVERNORSHIPS AND ONLY A HANDFUL OF CONGRESSIONAL SEATS. COMPARED TO AD AND COPEI, WHICH [ ] CLAIMED WOULD DOMINATE THE REGIONAL ELECTIONS, SALAS ROMER WOULD NOT BE ABLE TO COMPETE. THEY ENVISIONED SALAS SHRIVELING AFTER THE REGIONAL ELECTIONS, LEAVING AN ELECTORAL SPACE WHICH IRENE COULD NATURALLY FILL.

B6

12. (C) IN THIS REGARD, THEY ARGUED THAT SALAS' CAMPAIGN IS LINKED TO THAT OF HIS SON IN CARABBO STATE. HIS SON, HENRIQUE SALAS FEO, IS RUNNING FOR RE-ELECTION AS GOVERNOR. [ ] CLAIMED THAT SALAS ROMER'S SON COULD BE BEATEN IF THE DIFFERENT OPPOSING PARTIES COULD AGREE ON A SINGLE CANDIDATE. THIS WOULD REQUIRE THE CHAVEZ CANDIDATE TO DROP OUT OF THE RACE IN FAVOR OF THE CURRENT MAYOR OF VALENCIA, WHO IS SUPPORTED BY AD AND COPEI. [ ] RECOGNIZED THIS WAS FAR-FETCHED, BUT SAID THAT IF SALAS FEO COULD BE BEATEN, THEN SALAS ROMER'S CANDIDACY WOULD COLLAPSE, A PROSPECT WHICH MANY IN COPEI, AD, AND POLD PATRIDTICO MIGHT FIND APPEALING.

COMMENT

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